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ABSTRACT

This presentation explains how the Rhode Island Department of Education institutionalized two temporary systems -- a Teacher Center Project and an Education Information Center -- into a new departmental structure to better serve the schools of the State. The new structure created two bureaus, one to deliver services to LEAs in program development and one to administer federal and State grant programs. Service to LEAs in program development have been consolidated into the Bureau of Program Development and Diffusion. Linked to the Bureau are the Education Information Center, the Teacher Center, and the consultant field agents assigned to geographical service areas. Utilizing a joint management technique, the Bureau, the Information Center, and the Teacher Center function as an integrated system. The Bureau is the diffusion mechanism for the replication strategy in that it provides, through demonstrations, developmental assistance to local school systems in exploring programs identified and publicized by the EIC. Inservice training monies are provided to those school systems that choose to implement a specific program, and followup assistance is provided in planning programs and by identifying sources of funding for their support. (Author/EA)

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Organizing for Educational Improvement

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Organizing for Educational Improvement

Matthew Miles tells us that temporary systems are all around us in education. Our task, he says, is to use these systems so that they have major impact on our permanent systems. The purpose of this presentation is to share with you how the Rhode Island Department of Education has institutionalized two such temporary systems - one, a Teacher Center Project, the other, an Education Information Center - in a new departmental structure which we feel will better serve the schools of our state.

Those of you who are familiar with Roger's work on diffusion know that the social system has considerable influence on the success of adoption of innovations or changes. In order that you may more clearly understand what we have done, why we have done it, and why we have had some success, I will begin with a brief historical perspective of our department.

Education in Rhode Island has been under intensive study for about eight years. In 1965 our General Assembly funded a Commission to study the entire field of education. The Commission was established as a result of the concerns of educators and of legislators for the need to review "the educational institutions of the state and their organization." The special study commission worked for three and one-half years and recommended sweeping changes, many of which were adopted in 1969 legislation creating a Board of Regents responsible for <u>all education in Rhode Island</u>. This activity created the social sanction Rogers refers to as being necessary for change.

In January, 1971, the Board of Regents appointed a new Commissioner of Education, Dr. Fred G. Burke. Dr. Burke, who was Dean of International Studies at Buffalo University, had no previous State Education Agency

experience. He did, however, have considerable expertise in organization and management, political science, and international studies. Dr. Burke's appointment further reinforced the social sanction for change and brought a non-traditional orientation to the department, a second factor considered by Rogers to be important.

During the 1971-72 school year several additional events occurred. The Department developed and received funding for one of the four Teacher Center Projects in the country. It also received support for the development of an Education Information Center. Both projects were located within the Division of Academic Services, the major operational division within the Department.

Concurrent with these activities, Dr. Nelson F. Ashline was appointed Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Division of Academic Services. Dr. Ashline previously had been an Assistant Superintendent in the Cleveland school system. Again, in keeping with Roger's analysis of inducements to change, Dr. Ashline brought a new perspective to the Department and the Division, that of a consumer of State Education Agency services.

The organization of the Division at that time was largely along traditional lines - discrete federal program units and a cadre of subject matter consultants. Under the direction of Dr. Ashline, the management staff of the Division identified several issues generated by the existing structure of the Division. Among the major ones were:

1. Participation among units in decisions of federal grant awards was not sufficiently broad. The proliferation of categorical grants during the sixties created an SEA structure patterned after

the conglomerate in USOE. Little integration was accomplished because categorical funds were not directed at identified critical local educational needs.

2. With few exceptions, LEAs were not receiving regular, well defined, well organized assistance in identifying their needs, exploring program alternatives, conceptualizing programs, and preparing applications for project grants.

3. The role of the SEA subject matter consultant as a content expert was considered neither feasible or viable. First, few subject matter consultants could be expected to maintain high levels of competence and mastery of up-to-date information on their specialties. Second, as subject areas continued to sub-divide and proliferate, the cost of adding SEA staff in each new area proved to be prohibitive for such a small state (and probably for any state, in a cost-benefit analysis).

4. Having subject matter specialists tends to delude one into believing that there is no need to tap a larger universe of special talent. The continued proliferation of content specialties further fragments our view of learning when viewed in the context of pressing social issues (e.g., drug and environmental abuse). We cannot afford to dictate permanent staffing patterns along transient problem lines.

5. The distinct and often competing interests of the federal government on the one hand and the State and LEA interests on the other were not being successfully separated. Many of the consultants responsible for federal programs were also supposedly representing LEA interests. Organizationally speaking, the LEAs had no assurance that there were advocates for their interests in

the department.

In essence, what was needed was an organizational structure which provided LEAs with well defined and organized developmental assistance and at the same time maintained the Department's responsibility to the federal government for administration of categorical grant programs.

The new structure of our Division created two bureaus within the Division, one which has as its basic task delivering services to LEAs in program development and one which administers federal and state grant programs.

The federal activity, housed in the Bureau of Federal and State Grant Programs, has been isolated from its formerly synonymous association with program development. It is viewed in the new paradigm as a pool of resources with certain constraints upon its use. The prime function of the Federal and State Grant Program Bureau is to administer the granting process and monitor projects for compliance.

Service to LEAs in program development have been consolidated into the Bureau of Program Development and Diffusion. The Program Development and Diffusion Bureau is charged with the responsibility for assisting LEAs in all program development activities, whether funded from Federal, State, or local sources. The Bureau of Program Development and Diffusion has linked to it the Education Information Center, the Teacher Center, and consultant field agents assigned to geographical service areas. A more detailed look at the operation of the Information Center will be given later.

One key to the effective functioning of the Bureau as a dissemination, training, and implementation system is the Bureau consultant in his role as an extension agent. The basis for the consultant/extension agent's

functioning is the role statement, "The Bureau of Program Development and Diffusion Consultant as an Educational Extension Agent". While a consultant has a particualr area of expertise, it is of secondary significant to his basic responsibility of providing services (linkage and resource utilization functions) to LEAs in realizing their objectives in program development.

All extension agents are former SEA subject-matter consultants who have undergone extensive in-service training in information consultant skills, utilization of Federal categorical grant resources, and means of assisting LEAs in program development. The training sessions drew heavily on Dr. Seiber's reports, the Far West Laboratory's information consultant training package, and Ron Havelock's works. In addition we consulted with Charles Haughey and Bob Chesley from NIE, Bill Paisley from Stanford, Glenn Heathers from RBS, and Matthew Miles from the Center for Policy Research.

A second key to the effective functioning of the Bureau is the use of the matrix organization concept. We have utilized this concept to integrate and institutionalize the two temporary systems, Teacher Center and Information Center, into the department structure. The concept is operationalized by having the Director of the Teacher Center serve as Chief of the Bureau of Program Development and Diffusion and the Director of the Information Center serve as the administrator of one of the service areas. An additional Teacher Center staff member serves as administrator of a second service area. The result of utilizing the joint management technique is the functioning of the Bureau, the Information Center, and the Teacher Center as an integrated system.

The development of the Education Information Center in Rhode Island is divided into three phases. The first phase ran from May 1 through September, 1972 and was specifically designated as a planning period. The

second phase ran from October 1 through December and was a quasi-operational period during which a carefully controlled implementation of services to a small pilot group was conducted. The third and present phase, which will run until June 30, 1973 is a full implementation phase in which information services are being offered to all educators in the state.

The planning phase of the project was comprised of several major activities directed to the accomplishment of the developmental objectives. Staff were selected and trained, facilities, equipment and resource materials were procured, a computer search capability for accessing the ERIC files was obtained and general and specific policies and procedures were determined. Also during this period, the specific plans for the interface between the EIC and the emerging Bureau of Program Development and Diffusion were formulated.

During the second phase of the project the search system was piloted with the staff of the State Department of Education and the extension agent attached to the EIC served this clientele. Also, during this period the EIC staff conducted a thirty-hour training program in the extension agent role for approximately fifteen consultants in the Bureau of Program Development as well as twenty additional staff representing other divisions in the Department.

During the third phase the full-time extension agent is working with three target audiences in the state. The remaining educators in the state are served through the part-time information consultants in the Bureau of Program Development. These consultant extension agents spend approximately twenty to thirty percent of their time in information retrieval services.

The key element in the information services of the Information Center is the personal linkage to clients. Less than one percent of the information requests from local educators are directed to the Center by mail or telephone.

Almost every request for information services is handled in person by a member of the Bureau staff. Assistance is given in problem articulation and negotiation, the information package is delivered to the client and follow-up services are provided. In most cases, the information services are provided within the context of a total program development effort. In this way the extension agent is ready to bring other process skills such as needs assessment and project development to the client. Follow-up to the information service is a function of the basic thrust of the Bureau.

The management by objectives design provides the most basic description and analytical documentation of the EIC. The design is an adaptation and extrapolation of a model developed by the South Carolina information unit. At present, an effort is being made to delineate resources in terms of time and money to each objective.

The Education Information Center serves as the dissemination component of a total replication strategy in the Division of Academic Services. This strategy has as its major objective the replication of validated programs and practices in Rhode Island. The EIC identifies, collects, and disseminates information on validated programs. The Bureau of Program Development is the diffusion mechanism for the replication strategy in that it provides developmental assistance to local school systems in exploring these programs through demonstrations. In-service training moneys are provided to those school systems that choose to implement a specific program and follow-up assistance is providing in planning programs and in identifying sources of funding for their support. Documentation of this replication strategy is being developed by the Program Development Bureau.

The context in which these recent developments occured is not unique to Rhode Island. Greg Benson from New York presents an excellant discussion

of the issues in his paper being presented at this conference. Clearly, however, the specific steps that the Rhode Island Department of Education has taken can only serve as one alternative for accomplishing what, we feel, is the primary mission of state education agencies - the improvement of education through service and leadership.